

All We Have is Struggle

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It's the morning after. Almost half of the nation deserves some indulgence for despair, disgust and disappointment- but not for too long. We have now what we have always had- our ability and responsibility to wage a unifying struggle for human decency, justice and equity. It is harder now. But, that is all we have-together.

Too many people felt bereft of a sense of control over their lives. Far too many Americans have lost their sense of agency to influence whether a democratic government can be a force for personal and widespread wellbeing. As a result, the appeal of individual selfishness, tribalism and authoritarianism gained ascendancy. In and out of power, centrist Democrats utterly failed to provide a credible alternative leaving many cynical. Only explicitly unifying, resonant language and organizing for struggle to meet common needs (even with inevitable losses) can restore that sense of empowerment and trust.

Unfortunately, K-12 education was largely absent as a topic of concern in this presidential election. However, for many of us, our hopes and dreams are bound up with our expectations for our children. For that reason, it is ripe with potential for organizing to pressure our government to be more responsive to the needs of folks without privilege and to regain social trust.

Take a deep breath because now it is the time for a protracted struggle to revitalize the struggle for democratic, equitable education. Now is the time to reassert an ethos of citizen's responsibility for one another in education policy and practice. Now is the time to reassert an ethos of improvement for all over the restrictive idea of improvement for a few. Now is the time to utilize the revitalizing power of collaboration instead of the divisiveness of competition as the primary lever to advance the academic, social and emotional learning of all students. Now is the time to advance the broad promises of education to prepare every student for [life, work, and citizenship](#).

Several decades of a myopic bipartisan focus on the imposition of test-base accountability and punishment systems has failed to significantly narrow race and class-based opportunity and achievement gaps. Several decades of effort to create privately-controlled, but taxpayer-funded, charter schools and to provide tuition vouchers for private schools to compete with democratically funded public schools have increased segregation without achieving widespread improvement. Several decades of purposeful ideological

propaganda and on-the-cheap silver-bullet solutions have undermined public confidence in democratic government as a problem-solving mechanism.

To paraphrase Hillary Clinton's campaign slogan, we can only grow stronger together. It still takes a village. Only that will make America great, not again- because we have never substantively tried to embrace equity- but for the first time in earnest and with focused determination.

Progress requires massive citizen-generated pressure at the local, state and federal levels to:

- 1) Shift school funding from inequitable local property taxes to progressive income and corporate taxes to mediate resource inequality.
- 2) Incentivize integrated neighborhoods and schools. Separate education remains unequal education and undermines democracy.
- 3) Fully fund special education without compromising funding for all children.
- 4) Fully fund and prioritize class-size reduction.
- 5) Fully fund services for children and their families so that every student arrives in the classroom ready to learn.
- 6) Defund periodic consequential standardized assessments and instead, support efforts to increase educators' expertise to learn to move learning forward from collaborative analysis of well-designed everyday student work.
- 7) Defund short-term and prescriptive professional development and instead support sustained professional growth through collaboration and targeted access to expertise.
- 8) Defund local, state, and federal support for privately governed charters schools and vouchers and instead support innovation, professional autonomy and responsibility in democratically governed public schools that address the needs of all children.
- 9) Defund "alternative" short-term teacher development and instead, support university-based professional preparation that includes long-term supervised pre-service internships and in-service mentorship.
- 10) Fund tuition reimbursement, competitive salaries, and supportive working conditions to incentivize entry and retention in the teaching profession.
- 11) Support the development of school administrators who lead collaborative learning organizations rather than hierarchical command and control bureaucracies.

Let's get busy together as parents, community members, educators and employers.

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